



# HOW TO CALL

ONE'S OWN NAFS  
TO ACCOUNT

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## HOW TO CALL ONE'S OWN NAFS TO ACCOUNT

The great Islamic scholar Imâm Muhammad Ghazâlî 'rahmatullâhi 'alaih' was born in Tus city in Iran in the hijrî year 450, and passed away in the same city in 505 [1111 A.D.]. He states as follows in the Persian language in the sixth chapter of the fourth part of his book entitled **Kimyâ-i Se'âdet**, one of the hundreds of books which he wrote:

The forty-seventh âyat of Anbiyâ Sûra purports: "**We shall set up scales of justice for the day of Judgment, not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least. And if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it (to account). And enough are We to take account.**" He has informed us with this fact so that everyone should check his account. Our Prophet "alaihis-salâm" stated: "**A wise person is one who divides his day into four periods, in the first of which he thinks out what he has done and what he is going to do. In the second period he supplicates to Allâhu ta'âlâ and begs Him. In the third period he works in a branch of art or trade and earns his living in a way that is halâl. In the fourth period he rests, entertains himself with things that are mubâh (permitted by Allâhu ta'âlâ), does not do things that are harâm and does not go to such places.**" 'Umar ul-Fârûq 'radiy-Allâhu 'anh', the second Khalîfa, [passed away in Medîna-i-munawwara in the (hijrî) year 23. He was buried in the Hujra-i-se'âdet. He] stated: Call yourselves to account before you are asked to do so. Allâhu ta'âlâ commands us, as is purported: "**Endeavour not to satisfy your shahwâ, [i.e. the desires of your nafs,] by ways and manners that are harâm. Stand firm in this jihâd with resolution and endurance!**" It is for this reason that our religious superiors have realized that this world is a market place where they are transacting business with their nafs. Paradise is the profit to be earned in this business transaction, and Hell is the loss to be suffered. In other words, the profit is eternal felicity, and the loss is unending perdition. These people have envisaged a situation wherein their nafs is their business partner. First you make an agreement with your partner. Then you observe how things go, to see whether he abides by the agreement. Thereafter you settle your accounts with him, and sue him if he has been treacherous.

Likewise, these people, supposing their nafs is their business partner, follow this procedure: Establishing a business partnership; murâqaba, i.e. watching him closely; muhasaba, i.e. settling accounts with him; mu'âqabat, i.e. punishing him; mujâhada, struggling with him; and muâtabat, i.e. scolding him:

1– The first step is to establish a business partnership. Your business partner is not only your partner in earning money, but also your enemy in case he has been treacherous. On the other hand, worldly earnings are impermanent. They are of no value in the view of a wise person. In fact, some of them have said that transient goodness is valueless in comparison to something that exists eternally. Each breath a person takes is like a valuable gem, and such valuable gems can be collected to make up a treasure. This is the actual matter that deserves consideration. A wise person should, after performing morning prayer and without thinking of anything else, commune with his own nafs as follows: “My only capital is my lifespan. I have nothing else. So valuable is this capital that each breath exhaled cannot be regained by any means, and I have a pre-arranged number of breaths to take, and this number becomes smaller and smaller as days pass by. When the lifespan is up the trade will come to an end. Let us hold fast to the trade, for the time allotted is short; well, we will have a lot of time in the Hereafter, yet there will no longer be any trade or profit-making there. So valuable are days in this world that when the time of death comes a day’s respite will be begged for; yet it is not something attainable. Today we still possess that blessing. O my nafs, please do be careful lest you should lose this great fortune. Otherwise, crying and moaning will be no good. Suppose that the time of your death has come, and yet you beg to be given one more day and you are given that extra day, which is the very day you are living in at this moment! Then, what loss could ever be more tragic than letting go of this day instead of utilizing it for attaining the eternal felicity? Protect your tongue, your eyes, and all your seven limbs from harâms!”

“ ‘There are seven gates into Hell,’ they have said. ‘These gates are your seven limbs. I shall punish you if you do not protect these limbs against harâms and if you do not perform your acts of worship today.’ The nafs has a recalcitrant nature, so it will normally be reluctant to obey the commandments; yet it will take advice, and mortifications and refusal of its wishes will bring your influence to bear on it. This is the way to take your nafs to account. Rasûlullah ‘sall-Allâhu ’alaihi wa sallam’ stated: **‘A wise person is**

**one who takes himself to account before death and who does things that will be useful for him after death.”** He stated at another occasion: “**Before doing anything, think, and do it if it is something which Allâhu ta’âlâ approves of or which He has permitted; if otherwise, flee from that act!**” This is the agreement that you should renew daily with your nafs.

2– The second step is murâqaba, which means to exert control over it and not to be unmindful of it. If you forget about it, it will relapse into its former sensual and lazy habits. We should not forget that Allâhu ta’âlâ knows all our acts and thoughts. People see one another’s outward appearance. But Allâhu ta’âlâ sees both the outside and the inside of a person. A person who knows this fact will behave properly, (i.e. with adab,) both in his acts and in his thoughts. A person who denies this fact is a kâfir (unbeliever). On the other hand, it is sheer audacity to believe it and then behave in contrast to your belief. Allâhu ta’âlâ declares, as is purported: **“O man! Don’t you know that I am watching you every moment?”** An abyssinian entered the presence of Rasûlullah ‘sall-Allâhu ’alaihi wa sallam’ and said, “I have committed a lot of sins. Will my tawba<sup>[1]</sup> be accepted?” “**Yes, it will be,**” was the most blessed Prophet’s answer. “Was He seeing me as I committed those sins,” asked the Abyssinian again. When the beloved one of Allâhu ta’âlâ said, **“Yes, He was,”** the Abyssinian heaved a deep sigh, “Alas,” and collapsed dead. A model of (firm belief called) îmân and (genuine sense of shame called) hayâ! Our Prophet ‘sall-Allâhu ’alaihi wa sallam’ stated: **“Perform (your acts of) worship as if you were seeing Allâhu ta’âlâ! You do not see Him, but He sees you.”** If a person believes that He sees him, can he do something that He does not like? One of our great spiritual guides liked one of his disciples better than he did the others, which caused his other disciples to feel sad. One day he gave a fowl to each of his disciples, bidding him to kill it (by jugulation) at a place where nobody saw him. When the disciples who left with the fowls alive were back with the fowls each killed at a lonely place, there were one too few of them, for the choice disciple took a little longer to be back, and the fowl that he had with him was unskilled. When his master asked why he had brought back the fowl alive instead of obeying the command, he said, “I was unable to find a place where nobody would see me. He sees all places.” Thereupon

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[1] To make tawba means to repent for one’s sin(s), to beg Allâhu ta’âlâ for forgiveness, and to promise Him not to sin again.

the other disciples realized that their class-mate had attained a spiritual grade called ‘Mushâhada’. When the Egyptian Minister of Finance Potiphar’s wife Zuleykhâ invited Yûsuf ‘alaihis-salâm’ to be with her, the first thing she did was stand up and cover an idol that she regarded as holy. When the latter asked why she was doing so, “I would be ashamed in its presence,” she replied. Thereupon the chaste youngster said, “So you would feel ashamed in the presence of a rock-hewn object and then expect me not to feel so in the presence of my Rabb, (Allâhu ta’âlâ,) the Creator of the earth and the seven layers of heavens, and Who sees all!” Someone asked Juneyd Baghdâdî ‘quddisa sirruh’ (207-298 [910], Baghdâd:) “I cannot help myself looking at women and girls outside. What should I do to rid myself of this sinful habit?” “Think that Allâhu ta’âlâ sees you better than you see that woman,” replied the great scholar. Our Prophet ‘sall-Allâhu ’alaihi wa sallam’ stated: **“Allâhu ta’âlâ prepared a garden of Paradise called ‘Adn (Eden)’ for those people who, when they are about to commit sins, think of His Greatness, feel shame towards Him, and avoid sins.”**

[It is harâm for women to go out with their hair and arms and legs exposed. Women who have îmân should keep in mind the fact that Allâhu ta’âlâ sees all and avoid letting nâ-mahram<sup>[1]</sup> men see them naked.] ’Abdullah ibni Dînâr ‘radiy-Allâhu ’anh’ relates: ‘Umar ‘radiy-Allâhu ’anh’ and I were going to Medîna-i-imunawwara, when we saw a shepherd herding his flock down the mountain. The Khalîfa (Hadrat ’Umar) ‘radiy-Allâhu ’anh’ asked the shepherd to sell him one of the sheep. “I am a slave. The sheep are not mine,” replied the shepherd. “How can your master know about it? Tell him it was carried away by the wolves,” suggested the Khalîfa. When the shepherd said, “He will not know about it, but Allâhu ta’âlâ will,” ’Umar ‘radiy-Allâhu ’anh’ wept. Thereafter he found the slave’s master, bought him from his master, and manumitted him, saying, “As this reply of yours has manumitted you in the world, likewise it will manumit you in the world to come.”

3– The third step is the muhâsaba (accounting) that will be done after acts. As you go to bed every night, you should call your nafs to account concerning the acts done during the day, separating the capital, the profit, and the loss from one another.

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[1] Detailed information on the term ‘nâ-mahram’, an antonym for ‘mahram’, is available in the fourth fascicle of **Endless Bliss**.

The capital is the (compulsory acts termed) farz. The profit is the (supererogatory acts termed) sunnat and nâfila. And the loss is the sins (committed). As a person would settle his accounts with his business partner, likewise, he should always be on the lookout with his nafs. For, the nafs is an extremely deceitful and mendacious creature. It will disguise its own desires into benefits. It must be questioned even on its mubâh (permitted) acts, and asked why it has done that. If it has done something harmful, it must be made to pay for it. Ibn-as-Samed was one of the great Awliyâ and scholars. He calculated his past lifetime, sixty hijrî years, i.e. hundred and twenty-one thousand and five hundred (121,500) days. “Alas,” he thought. “Supposing I had committed a single sin daily, the total sum would be a hundred and twenty-one thousand and five hundred sins. However, there were days when I committed hundreds of sins. How can I ever redeem myself with all these sins!” He collapsed with a sharp exclamation. People around him saw that he was dead.

People, however, do not call themselves to account. If a person put a grain of sand into his room each time he committed a sin, the room would be filled with sand in a couple of years. If the recording angels on our shoulders charged us a penny for each sin we committed, we would have to part with our entire property to pay for the total sum. Paradoxically, we who count the meagre number of words of prayers as we click the beads of our rosary and say, “subhânnâllah,” in a pensive and oblivious mood and then say to ourselves, “Oh, I have said a hundred prayers,” are the same people who never count the so many empty words that we utter daily. Were we to count them, they would exceed thousands. And yet we still expect that the scale with our thawâbs (good deeds) will weigh heavier. What kind of reasoning is that! It is for this reason that 'Umar 'radiy-Allâhu 'anh' said: “Weigh your own acts before they are weighed!” 'Umar 'radiy-Allâhu 'anh' would whip his own feet and say (unto himself), “Why did you commit that act today,” every evening. Ibni Salâm 'rahmatullâhi 'alaïh' was carrying firewood on his back, when some people saw him and asked, “Are you a porter?” “I am trying my nafs to see how it feels,” was his reply. Anas (or Enes) 'radiy-Allâhu 'anh' [d. 91 h.] relates: “One day I saw 'Umar 'radiy-Allâhu ta'âlâ 'anh'. He was saying unto himself, “Shame on you, my nafs, who is said to be the Amîr-ul-mu'minîn! Either fear Allâhu ta'âlâ or get ready for the torment He is going to inflict on you!”

4- The fourth step is to punish the nafs. If the nafs is not called

to account and its faults are not seen and it is not punished, it will go on the rampage. It will become impossible to cope with it. If it has eaten something doubtful,<sup>[1]</sup> it must be punished with hunger. If it has looked at nā-mahram women, it must be banned from looking at good mubâhs. Each and every limb must be subjected to a corresponding punishment. Junayd (or Juneyd) Baghdâdî ‘rahmatullâhi ‘alaih’ (d. 298 [910 A.D.], Baghdâd) relates: “One night Ibn-i-Kezîtî ‘rahima-hullâhu ta’âlâ’ (had nocturnal emission, so that he) became junub. As he attempted to get up for ghusl,<sup>[2]</sup> his nafs felt too lazy to do so and induced him to indulge his desire to sleep and delay the ghusl till he went to a bath the following day; the night’s chill and the fear of catching cold were also effective in the negligence. Upon that event he swore an oath to have a ghusl with his night gown on. He did so, too, in order to punish his nafs for its laxity in a commandment of Allâhu ta’âlâ.”

Someone looked at a girl (nâ-mahram to him). Thereupon he repented and took an oath never to have a cold drink any longer. He adhered to his oath and never drank anything cool again. Abû Talha ‘radiy-Allâhu ta’âlâ ’anh’ was performing namâz in his orchard. A splendid bird alighted on a branch near him. Distracted by the bird, he was confused about the number of the rak’ats that he had performed. As a punishment to his nafs, he donated the entire orchard to the poor. [Abû Talha Zayd bin Sehl-i-Ansârî fought in all the ghazâs (holy wars). He passed away in (the hijrî year) 34, when he was 74 years old.] Mâlik bin ’Abdullah-il-Hes’âmî ‘rahima-hullâhu ta’âlâ’ relates: One day Rebâh-ul-Qaysî ‘rahima-hullâhu ta’âlâ’ came to our place and asked about my father. When I said that he was sleeping, “One simply does not sleep after late afternoon,” he said, and left. I went behind him. He was saying to himself, “O, you, windbag! What is your business with other people’s sleeping habits? I make a promise to no longer rest my head on a cushion for one year!” Temîm-i-Dârî ‘radiy-Allâhu ta’âlâ ’anh’ slept through the evening prayer one day. To punish his nafs, he promised himself not to sleep for one year. [Temîm-i-Dârî was one of the Ashâb-i-kirâm (or the Sahâbâ).] Mejmâ’ ‘rahima-hullâhu ta’âlâ’ was one of the great Awliyâ. One day he raised his head and saw a girl at a window. Thereupon he made a promise (to himself) never to look up again.

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[1] Please see the first chapter of the sixth fascicle of **Endless Bliss** concerning what is meant by ‘doubtful’.

[2] Please see the fourth chapter of the fourth fascicle of Endless Bliss.

5– The fifth step is mujâhada. Doing much worship was a method which some of our superiors had recourse to when they wanted to punish their nafs for wrongdoing. 'Abdullah ibni 'Umar 'radiy-Allâhu 'anhumâ', for instance, would spend a sleepless night for being too late for a certain namâz in jamâ'at.<sup>[1]</sup> 'Umar 'radiy-Allâhu 'anh' donated a piece of property that was worth two hundred thousand dirhams of silver as alms because he had been too late for a namâz in jamâ'at. One day 'Abdullah ibni 'Umar 'radiy-Allâhu 'anhumâ' performed an evening prayer somewhat late, so that dusk had gathered and the stars had begun to appear. For that delay he manumitted two slaves. There are quite a number of other people who followed similar policies. The best medicine for a person unable to make his nafs perform acts willingly is to keep a pious person company. Watching that blessed person's rejoicing in the performance of the acts of worship will accustom him to doing the same. Someone relates: "Whenever I sense reluctance in my nafs to perform the acts of worship, I have sohbat with Muhammad bin Wâsî 'rahima-hullâhu ta'âlâ' (d. 112 [721 A.D.]), (i.e. I keep him company.) Within a week's time spent in company with him I observe that my nafs has taken up the habit of doing the acts of worship willingly." People unable to find a man of Allah should read biographies of sâlih (pious) people who lived in earlier times. Ahmad bin Zerîn 'rahima-hullâhu ta'âlâ' would not look around himself. When he was asked why, he explained: "Allâhu ta'âlâ has created the eyes so that we should watch the order in the world, the subtle delicacies in everything around us, and His power and greatness with admiration and take lessons. It will be wrong to look at all these things without taking lessons and benefits." Abudderdâ 'radiy-Allâhu ta'âlâ 'anh' states: "I want to live in this world for three things: To perform namâz throughout long nights; to fast during long days; and to sit in the presence of sâlih persons." [Abudderdâ 'radiy-Allâhu ta'âlâ 'anh' is one of the Sahâba. He belongs to the tribe of Khazraj. He is the earliest governor of Damascus. He passed away in (the hijrî year) 33.] Alqama bin Qays 'rahima-hullâhu ta'âlâ' was extremely belligerent against his own nafs. When he was asked why he was so harsh against his nafs, he would say, "I am so because I love my nafs very much. I am trying to protect my nafs against Hell." When he was told that he had not been commanded so much trouble, he

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[1] Please see the twentieth chapter of the fourth fascicle of **Endless Bliss** for 'namâz in jamâ'at'.

would reply, “I am doing so lest I should beat my head in despair tomorrow.” [Alqama is one of the greater ones of the Tâbi’în<sup>[1]</sup> He was a disciple of ’Abdullah ibni Mes’ûd ‘radîy-Allâhu ta’âlâ ’anh’ (d. 32 [651 A.D.]. He passed away in the sixty-first year (of the Hegira).]

#### 6– The sixth step is to scold and chide the nafs.

It is intrinsic in the creation of the nafs to avoid good acts, to run after evils, to laze all the time, and to satisfy its desires. Allâhu ta’âlâ commands us to break our nafs of these habits and to steer them away from the wrong course and into the right one. In order to accomplish this duty of ours, we must now fondle it, then browbeat it, and handle it both with words and with actions, alternately. For, the nafs has been created in such a nature as it will run after things that sound good to it and will patiently endure the hardships on its way to obtain them. The most insurmountable obstacle to the nafs’s attaining happiness is its own unawareness and ignorance. If it is awakened from unawareness and shown the way that will lead it to happiness, it will admit it. It is for this reason that Allâhu ta’âlâ declares, as is purported in Zâriyât Sûra: “**Give them good counsel! Believers will surely benefit from good counsel.**” Your nafs is no different from the nafs of others. Good counsel will have an effect on it. Then, give your own nafs good counsel and chide it. In fact, do not be remiss in chiding it! Say unto it: “O my nafs! You claim to be wise, and feel indignation at being called an idiot. However, who could ever be more idiotic than a person who spends his whole life lazing around, laughing, and revelling as you do. Your case is like that of a murderer who enjoys himself although he knows that the police are after him and he will be hanged when he is caught. Can there be another person more idiotic than him? O my nafs! Time of death is approaching, and either Paradise or Hell is awaiting you. Who knows, perhaps you will meet your death today. If not today, it will definitely come one day. If something is sure to befall you, expect it today! In fact, death has not given a certain time to any person, nor has it ever said to anybody that it will be with them at night or during

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[1] A Believer who saw or talked with the Messenger of Allah at least once (as the Prophet was alive) is called a Sahabî. When we say the Sahâba or the Ashâb-i-kirâm, we mean all the Sahabîs. If a Believer did not see the Prophet but saw at least one Sahabî, he is called a Tâbî’ (pl. Tâbi’în). The Taba-i-tâbî’în are the Believers each of whom saw at least one of the Tâbi’în.

daytime, soon or late, or in the summer or in the winter. It will catch you all of a sudden and at a time when you do not expect it at all, as it does with everybody. If you have not prepared yourself for that unexpected moment, could a greater instance of idiocy ever be imagined. Then, shame on you, o my nafs.

“You have dived into sins. If you think that Allâhu ta’âlâ does not see you, then you are an unbeliever! If you believe that He sees you, than you are so insolent and shameless that His seeing you is not important for you. Then, shame on you, o my nafs!

“If your servants disobey you, you will be angry with them! Then, how can you be sure that Allâhu ta’âlâ will not be angry with you! If you slight His torment, hold your finger on fire! Or sit under the hot sun for an hour! Or stay somewhat too long in the hot room (caldarium) of a Turkish bath, and see how weak and frail you are! If we should suppose, however, that you think that He will not punish you for your wrongdoings in the world, then you must have denied and belied not only the Qur’ân al-kerîm but also all the past Prophets “alaihim-us-salawât-u-wa-t-teslîmât”, whose number is well above one hundred and twenty-four thousand. For, Allâhu ta’âlâ declares, as is purported in the hundred and twenty-third âyat of Nisâ Sûra: **“... Whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly. ...”** A wrongdoer will be treated in kind. Then, shame on you, o my nafs!

“When you commit a sin; if you say, ‘He will forgive me because He is kerîm and rahîm (merciful, compassionate),’ then why does He make hundreds of thousands of people experience troubles, hunger and illness in the world, and why doesn’t He give crops to people who do not cultivate their land! As you have recourse to all sorts of tricks for the purpose of obtaining your sensuous desires, you do not say, ‘Allâhu ta’âlâ is kerîm and rahîm; so He will give me all my desires without my taking any pains.’ Then, shame on you, o my nafs!

“Maybe you will say that you believe but you lack the stamina to withstand hardships. In that case you do not know the fact that people with lack of stamina to withstand hardships should avoid the hardships by putting forth a minimal effort and that avoiding torment in Hell requires performing the acts of farz, which will cost them some physical exertion in the world. If you cannot withstand the world’s trifling hardships, then how will you withstand the imminent torment in Hell, and how will that meagre stamina of yours help you to endure all those abasements, insults,

denunciations and expulsions that you are to be subjected to? Then, shame on you, o my nafs!

“You endure so many exertions and disgraceful situations and do without all your sensuous desires in order to get over a certain illness on the advice of a Jewish doctor, and yet you do not know that torment in Hell is incomparably more vehement than illness and poverty in the world. Then, shame on you, o my nafs!

“You say that you will make tawba and perform good acts later; but death may come earlier, and you may be left alone in your woebegoneness. You are wrong to think that making tawba tomorrow will be easier than making it today. For, the later the tawba is made, the more difficult will it be for you, and when you face death it will be as futile as feeding your hungry pack animal just before it starts climbing the hill. That state you are in is like that of a student who does not study for an examination with the false assumption that he will learn all the knowledge on the day of the examination because he does not know that learning takes time. Likewise, purification of the dirty nafs requires struggling for a long time. After an entire life wasted for nothing, how can you do that in a moment? Why don’t you know the value of young age before getting old, that of good health before becoming ill, that of comfort before getting beleaguered with troubles, and that of life before you die? Then, shame on you, o my nafs!

“Why do you prepare by summer and without any delay all the things that you will need in winter, instead of trusting yourself to the mercy and kindness of Allâhu ta’âlâ for obtaining them? However, the cold of Hell is no less intense than the cold of winter, and the heat of its fire is no less sweltering than the sun in July. While you are never remiss in such (worldly) preparations, you are slack in matters concerning the world to come. What is the reason for this paradox? Is it because you do not believe the world to come and the Rising Day and hide your agnosticism in your heart? That, in turn, would cost you eternal perdition. Then, shame on you, o my nafs!

“A person who does not commit himself to the care of the nûr of ma’rifat and then expects that the mercy and kindness of Allâhu ta’âlâ will rescue him from the next world’s inferno, which in fact is the consequence of his own sensuous indulgences in the world, is like a person who expects that Allâhu ta’âlâ will be kind enough to protect him from catching cold without him protecting himself by simply wearing clothes thick enough. The latter does not know that as Allâhu ta’âlâ has created the winter whereby to provide a

multitude of benefits, likewise He has been merciful and kind enough to create also the materials to be used for making clothes and to endow mankind with the intellectual and manual skills to convert those materials into clothes. In other words, His kindness is in His assistance in the provision of clothes, and not in His protection against being cold without clothes. Then, shame on you, o my nafs!

“Do not suppose that you will suffer torment because your sins anger Allâhu ta’âlâ, and do not say, for instance, ‘What harm do my sins cause Him to make Him angry with me?’ The torment that will burn you in Hell is your own making, and its raw material is your own lusts. Likewise, illness is the result of poisons consumed and harmful substances received by the body, rather than a vengeance inflicted for not following the doctor’s advice. Then, shame on you, o my nafs!

“O my nafs! I see that you have been addicted to the blessings and flavours offered by the world and let yourself be dragged away by them! Even if you do not believe in Paradise and Hell, be wise enough at least not to deny death! All these blessings and flavours will be taken away from you, so that separation from them will hurt you bitterly! Love them as much as you like and hold on to them as fast as you can, and yet the more you love them the more bitterly will the fire of separation hurt. Then, shame on you, o my nafs!

“Why do you hold so fast on to the world? Even if the entire world is yours and all the people on the earth prostrate themselves before you, before long you and all those people will become earth. Your names will be forgotten and wiped out from memories. Does anyone remember past emperors? The worldlies you have been given are scanty by comparison, and that scanty amount is changing for the worse. You are sacrificing the eternal blessings of Paradise for their sake. Then, shame on you, o my nafs!

“Supposing someone paid a precious and eternally durable jewel in return for a broken flower pot; how mockingly you would laugh at him! This world is like that flower pot taken in return. Imagine that it has broken and you have lost the eternal jewel, and what has been left for you is sheer despair and torment!”

With these remarks and the like, everybody should scold their own nafs, thereby paying themselves their own right and their being the initial second person to listen to their own advice! May Allâhu ta’âlâ bless the travellers of the right way with safety and salvation! Âmîn.

**Nothing exists without knowledge, the prime mover of all;  
Along dark alleys your company, and faithful withall.  
No friend is more faithful, and no darling more loyal.  
All things may be harmful, it, alone, is exceptional.  
Knowledge is like the main, bounding yet itself boundless.  
Man will be tired of all, with knowledge he is tireless.  
How can it be otherwise, since Allah praises it?  
See what the blessed Prophet says in a hadîth about it:  
“Quest for knowledge, even as far as in China be it.”  
It is farz for all, no Believer exempted from it.  
Look what 'Alî-ul-murtadâ sayeth, harken to him:  
“If someone taught me one letter, I'd be a slave for him.”  
Men of knowledge will protect Islam against destruction.  
Learned people are on earth Divine Attribute's reflection.  
The ink that is used by scholars is more blessed even than  
The blood that is fisâbilillah<sup>[1]</sup> lost by martyred man.”  
For, jihâd-i-ekber<sup>[2]</sup> is with knowledge, alone, likely;  
Safety in both worlds lies with practising knowledge only.  
Scholar is above the zâhid; zuhd<sup>[3]</sup> is below learning.  
Scholars are with Prophets in the domain that is coming.  
Don't say there are no longer scholars in the world; perhaps,  
There are; open your eyes, and let your heart rid that darkness!  
Islamic scholars were praised in hadîths;  
They are like the Israelite Prophets.  
One statement made by scholars survives for many years,  
Picks you from lowest ditches and raises you to heavens.  
It is hard now to find a scholar, what should we do, then?  
Well, let's keep reading valuable books written by learned men.  
A book is a cage of gold, and knowledge in it a bird;  
He who buys the cage is also possessor of the bird.  
Adhere fast to books, and with nûr let your heart be sated;  
And let the Qur'ân al-kerîm be the first book you read!**

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[1] Only for the grace of Allah.

[2] Jihâd that is the greatest.

[3] Zuhd means to avoid too much of worldly pleasures for fear of inadvertently doing something doubtful. Zâhid means person who practises zuhd.

*The next work in value is Muslim, after Bukhârî,  
And thereafter cometh Maktûbât by Imâm Rabbâni.  
In that third one Tasawwuf and Fiqh were brought together;  
In a hadîth is applauded its valuable author.*

*A spring of wonders, a source of words never heard before,  
Deep matters whose solution defied centuries before.*

*All are in Maktûbât and also in its translation;  
Without it knowledge is lacking, and hard is salvation.*

*‘Sahâba the blessed’ is another book you have to see;  
Read it! How valuable the Sahâba are you will see.*

*Translation of Maktûbât is endless felicity;  
Fortunately, in three books, it can be found easily.*

*See ‘Ibni ’Âbidîn’ an ocean to infinity!  
A gigantic book of Fiqh in Madhhab of Hanafî.*

*See the books ‘Ihyâ ’ulûm’ and Kimyâ-i-Sa’âdat;  
So Imâm Ghazâlî you will never ever forget.*

*When you read ‘Riyâd-un-nâsikhîn’ you will understand;  
And say, “Muhammad Rebhâmî is a scholar so grand.”*

*Learn about Shaikh-ul-ekber, Geilânî, Bahâ’ad-dîn;  
And many others, who protected Islam from ruin.*

*‘Mawâhib’ is a book mentioned in so many others;  
And informs about the blessed Prophet in particulars.*

*‘Jihâr-i-yâr-i-ghuzîn’ is another work of art,  
Which we sorely need, for we are badly dark in heart.*

*See ‘Ma’rifatnâma’, you will know Ibrâhîm Haqqî.  
Read ‘Birgivî’ much, do not skimp on such necessity.*

*Biographies of the Awliyâ who are known widely.  
Exist in ‘Reshehât’ and in ‘Nefehât’, thoroughly.*

*‘Barakât Ahmadî’ and ‘Mu’jizât-ul-Anbiyâ’;  
And how nicely written is ‘Hadîqat-ul-Awliyâ’.*

*See ‘Durr-i-yektâ’ and ‘Umdat-ul-islâm’; with these two,  
And ‘Miftâh-ul-Jannat’, and ‘Ayyuh-al-walad’, too.*

*The booklet entitled ‘Râbita’ teaches Tasawwuf;  
By Sayyid Wali ’Abd-ul-Hakîm, man of Tasawwuf.*

*Many another book, each is a pearl in the sea;  
May their authors in Allah’s Compassion be!*

*Yâ Rabbi, please do convey to them our salutation!  
And bless those who follow them with safety and salvation!*

## **SALUTATIONS and GREETINGS**

### **(Among Muslims)**

When two Muslims meet, it is an act of sunnat for them to say, “**Salâmun ’alaikum**,” to each other and to (shake hands with each other, i.e. to) make musâfaha with the hands. As they make musâfaha, their sins become shaken off.

It is an act of harâm, which is sinful, to greet (by saying, “**Salâmun ’alaikum**,”) the following eight people:

- 1– Nâ-mahram<sup>[1]</sup> girls and young women must not be greeted.
- 2– People who play chess or any other game must not be greeted.
- 3– People who gamble must not be greeted.
- 4– People who drink alcoholic beverages must not be greeted.
- 5– People who backbite others must not be greeted.
- 6– Singers must not be greeted.
- 7– People who commit sins openly and publicly must not be greeted.
- 8– Men who look at (nâ-mahram) women and girls must not be greeted.

People seen doing the following things must not be greeted only as long as they are in that state:

- 1– A person performing namâz must not be greeted.
- 2– A khatîb must not be greeted as he is making the khutba.
- 3– A person reading (or reciting) the Qur’ân-al kerîm must not be greeted.
- 4– A person dhikring or preaching must not be greeted.
- 5– A person reading (or reciting) hadîth-i-sherîfs must not be greeted.
- 6– A person listening to the aforesaid activities must not be greeted.
- 7– A person studying teachings of Fiqh must not be greeted.
- 8– Judges at law courts must not be greeted.
- 9– People discussing religious teachings must not be greeted.
- 10– A muadhdhin (or muazzin) must not be greeted as he is performing (calling) the azân (or adhân).

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[1] Please see the eighth chapter of the fourth fascicle of **Endless Bliss** for ‘nâ-mahram’.

11– A muadhdhin must not be greeted as he is saying the iqâmat. (Please see the eleventh chapter of the fourth fascicle of **Endless Bliss.**)

12– A religious teacher must not be greeted as he is teaching his religious class.

13– A man busy with his wife must not be greeted.

14– A person with their awrat parts exposed must not be greeted.

15– A person urinating (or defecating) must not be greeted.

16– A person eating must not be greeted.

A man greets old women even if they are not his mahram relatives. At times of darûrat, and if he is sure that he will not feel lust, he may make musâfaha with them, [i.e. shake their hands.] Sinners are greeted if they have made tawba for their sins. They may be greeted with the intention of preventing them as they are committing sins.

Disbelievers may be greeted only when there is something to be done with them. A Muslim who glorifies a disbeliever by greeting them respectfully will become a disbeliever. A person who honours a disbeliever with such phrases as ‘my master’, etc. will become a disbeliever [**Ibni ’Âbidîn**, vol.5, p.267]. A hungry person (who arrives at a place where other Muslims are eating) may greet them (by saying, “Salâmun ’alaikum”) if he knows that he will be invited to the table. Disciples (and students) may greet their teachers.

When a Muslim greets other Muslims, or when he sneezes up to three times and then says, “**Al-hamd-u-lillâh**,” it is farz-i-kifâya for (at least one of) the others to acknowledge his greeting, (which he made by saying, “Salâmun ’alaikum,”) or his saying, “Al-hamdu-lillâh,” respectively, immediately upon hearing him.<sup>[1]</sup> It is harâm for those who hear him to delay the acknowledgement. They will have to make tawba if they do so. It is farz to acknowledge, by saying, “**Wa ’alaikum salâm**,” a greeting received by way of a letter. It is mustâhab to write the acknowledgement and send it. When a person accepts to carry and deliver a (verbal) message of greeting, it is farz for him to carry the word and deliver it (to the addressee). For, it has become amânat, (i.e. something entrusted to him.) If he has not accepted to carry the word of greeting, then

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[1] A acknowledgement must be made by saying, “Yerhamukallah,” to a person who sneezes and thereafter says, “Al-hamdu-lillâh.”

it is a **vedî'a**.<sup>[1]</sup> It is not obligatory to carry the vedî'a.

Of the latter group of situations written above, persons involved in the first two situations do not answer the greetings extended to them. As to the other situations up to number twelve, people greeted therein had better answer the greetings. It is not necessary to acknowledge a beggar's greeting. It is not an act of farz, (i.e. compulsory,) to acknowledge greetings as you are eating and drinking or when you are in the restroom or greetings made by a child or a drunkard or a fâsiq person (**Ibni 'Âbidîn**, vol.5, p.267).

Greeting is made by saying, “**Salâmun 'alaikum**,” or, “**Ess-salâmu 'alaikum**.” It is not an act of farz to acknowledge greetings made by saying, “**Salâm 'alaikum**,” or by saying other words.

As is written in the book entitled **Riyâd-un-nâsikhîn**, (and written by Muhammed Rebhâmî 'rahmatullâhi ta'âlâ 'alaîh',) it is stated in the book entitled **Fatâwâ-i-Sirâjiyya**, (written by 'Alî 'Ushî bin 'Uthmân Ferghânawî 'rahmatullâhi ta'âlâ 'alaîh', d. 575 [1180 A.D.]:) “As you greet someone, you should make it in the plural form, that is, you should greet as if you are greeting a number of people. For, a Believer is never alone. Protecting (muhâfaza) angels and the two angels **Kirâman kâtibîn** keep them company.” The hadîth-i-sherîf stating that the word expressing the greeting should be used in the plural form is quoted in the book entitled **Riyâd-us-sâlîhîn** (and written by Yahyâ bin Sheref Nawawî [or Nehevî] 'rahmatullâhi ta'âlâ 'alaîh', 631 [1233 A.D.] – 676 [1277], Damascus.)

The meaning of “**Salâmun 'alaikum**” is: “I am a Muslim. I will not harm you. You are in safety.” A hadîth-i-sherîf commands: “**Greet Muslims** (by saying, ‘**Salâmun 'alaikum**,’) **the ones whom you know and those whom you do not know alike!**” Disbelievers must not be greeted, (by saying, “**Salâmun 'alaikum**.”) You only say, “**Wa 'alaikum**,” when they greet you. It is permissible for a Muslim man to greet any of the eighteen women<sup>[2]</sup> who are eternally harâm for him to marry and make (an Islamic kind of contract termed) **nikâh** with. It is an act of farz-i-kifâya to acknowledge their greetings. Concerning the seven women with

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[1] Please see the last four paragraphs of the ninth chapter of the sixth fascicle of **Endless Bliss**.

[2] The twelfth chapter of the fifth fascicle of **Endless Bliss** provides detailed information on this subject.

whom marriage is temporarily harâm on account of conditions prescribed by Islam, and who are halâl for the man in question to marry when the conditions no longer exist; it is not jâ'iz, (that is, Islam does not give permission,) to greet them. And nor is it an act of farz to acknowledge their greetings.

It is not jâ'iz to greet a rich person (only) because he is rich. If the rich person greets you first, it becomes an act of farz to acknowledge the greeting. It is jâ'iz for seniors to greet children.

The order of precedence which is sunnat is as follows: older people greet younger ones; townsmen greet villagers; a person riding a camel greets one riding a horse; one riding a horse greets one riding a donkey; one riding a donkey greets one walking; a person standing greets one who is sitting; a group of people greet another group greater in number; a master greets his servant; the father greets the son; the mother greets the daughter, first. A person with a higher position and social status has precedence in greeting. As a matter of fact, on the night of Mi'râj Allâhu ta'âlâ was the first party to greet. If two Muslims greet each other simultaneously, it becomes farz for both parties to acknowledge the other's greeting. If they greet each other one (immediately) after the other; the later greeting stands for the acknowledgement. When more than one people are greeted, acknowledgement on the part of only one of the people in the greeted group, be it a child, will suffice, and the other people in the group will not have to acknowledge the greeting.

In dispensations from that of Âdam "alaihis-salâm" to that of Ibrâhîm "alaihis-salâm", salutations had been being made by both parties' prostrating themselves before each other. Thereafter they were changed into both people's embracing each other. During the dispensation of Muhammad "alaihis-salâm" it became an act of sunnat to make musâfaha with the hands.

[Shiites respond to the greeting in kind. They acknowledge it by saying, "Salâmun 'alaikum." They do not say, "Alaikum salâm."]

'Abdullah bin Salâm 'radiy-Allâhu 'anh' relates: When the Rasûl-i-ekrem 'sall-Allâhu 'alaihi wa sallam' made his blessed migration to Medîna, the first hadîth-i-sherîf that I heard from his blessed mouth was this: **"Greet one another! Offer food to one another! Take care about your relatives' rights! Perform midnight namâz as others are asleep! Doing these things, enter Paradise in safety!"** Here we end our citation from **Riyâd-un-nâsikhîn**.

(Ahmad bin Muhammed bin Ismâ'il) Tahtawî ‘rahmatullâhi ta’âlâ ‘alaih’ (d. 1231 [1815 A.D.]) states as follows in the hundred and seventy-fourth page of his annotation to the commentary book entitled **Merâq-il-felâh**: “It is an act of sunnat for Muslims to make musâfaha when they meet one another. As a matter of fact, Abû Zer Ghifârî ‘radîy-Allâhu ‘anh’ (d. 32 [652 A.D.], Rebza in the vicinity of Medîna) states as follows in a hadîth-i-sherîf quoted by Abû Dâwûd Sijstânî ‘rahmatullâhi ta’âlâ ‘alaih’ (202 [817 A.D.] – 275 [888], Basra): “Every time I met Rasûlullah ‘sall-Allâhu ‘alaihi wa sallam’, he would make musâfaha with me.” **Musâfaha** is two people’s attaching the palms of their right hands to each other, in a manner wherein the sides of their thumbs contact each other. The handshake which is done by holding the second person’s fingers in your palm, and which is in fashion today, is a Shiite manner of handshake. The sunnat fashion, however, is, when you meet (your Muslim brother) and as both of you utter the words of greeting, to attach the inner parts of four of the fingers of your naked right hand [without wearing gloves or any other kind of wrapper] to the outer part of his right hand, towards his thumb. Affection spreads from the vein on the thumb. As two Muslims make musâfaha, they exchange brotherly affection.” This is another example showing that Muslims should love one another and avoid separatism.

Ibni ’Âbidîn states as follows in the chapter about *istibrâ*<sup>[1]</sup> in the fifth volume: “It is an act of *bid’at* for Muslims to make musâfaha with one another before leaving the mosque after each of the daily prayers of *namâz*. It is Shiites’ custom to do so. [It is *jâiz* (permissible), on ‘Iyd days, to celebrate the ‘Iyd days by making musâfaha with one another in mosques or, at other times, to make musâfaha from time to time without making it a habit.] It is *jâ’iz* to greet a *dhimmî* or to make musâfaha with him when it is needed to do so. It is not *jâ’iz* to do so for reverence. Reverence to a disbeliever causes disbelief.

Sons and daughters must be given bed-rooms separate from each other and from that of their parents. You (may) kiss an Islamic scholar’s or your either parent’s hand. You do not kiss others’ hands. When you meet a friend of yours, it is *harâm* to kiss their hand.

When your elders enter, it is an act of *mustahab* to meet them standing. When you enter, it is *makrûh* to rejoice to see others’

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[1] Please see the second paragraph following the paragraph headlined **ISTINJÂ** in the sixth chapter of the fourth fascicle of **Endless Bliss**.

standing up. It is permissible to kiss (a copy of) the Qur'ân al-kerîm or (a loaf or a slice or a roll of) bread.

It is stated in the thirteen hundred and thirty-fourth page of the book entitled **Beriqa**: It is a sinful act to bow as you greet or acknowledge a greeting. It is enjoined as follows in a hadîth-i-sherîf: “**Do not bow to one another or hug one another when you meet one another!**” It is harâm to make rukû’, (i.e. to bend, to assume a stooping posture like you do in namâz,) or to make sajda (prostration) before anyone other than Allâhu ta’âlâ. Ibni Nujaym Zeyn-ad-dîn Misrî ‘rahmatullâhi ta’âlâ ’alaih’ states in his book entitled **Seghâir wa Kebâir** that salutations with the hand are sinful acts. Ismâ’îl Sivâsî explains his statement as follows: “For, it is customary among disbelievers to salute with the hand.”

Imâm Rabbâni ‘rahmatullâhi ’alaih’ states in his two hundred and sixty-fifth letter: “It is necessary to be careful about Muslims’ rights. It is stated in a hadîth-i-sherîf: **A Muslim has five rights that are incumbent upon another Muslim: To acknowledge his greeting; to visit (or at least ask about) the bedridden people (if there are any) in his family; to attend his funeral (janâza); to participate in his invitations; and to answer him by saying, “Ye-r-hamukallah,” when he sneezes and then says, “Al-hamd-u-lillâh.”**” However, participation in an invitation is conditional on certain requirements. The book entitled **Ihyâ-ul-’ulûm** provides the following explanation concerning the requirements: ‘If the food (given there) is doubtful or if there are silk tissues or gold and/or silver utensils on the table or there are pictures of living beings (men and animals) on the ceiling and/or on the walls or if musical instruments or harâm games are being played at the place of invitation, you should not go there. An invitation made by a tyrant or by a bid’at holder or by a habitual sinner (fâsiq) or by a wicked person or for which too much money has been spent for ostentatious purposes should not be participated at.’ It is stated in the book entitled **Shir’at-ul-islâm**: ‘An invitation made for ostentation or show must not be participated at.’ It is stated in the book entitled **Muhît-i-Burhâni** (and written by Burhan-ad-dîn Mahmûd bin Tâj-ud-dîn Ahmad bin ’Abd-ul-’Azîz Bukhârî ‘rahmatullâhi ta’âlâ ’alaih’, 551 [1156 A.D.] – martyred in 616 [1219]: ‘Invitations where people are playing harâm games or musical instruments or backbiting Muslims or consuming alcoholic beverages must not be participated at.’ The same is written in the book entitled **Metâlib-ul-muslimîn**. Invitations where such deterrences do not exist should be participated at. Such invitations

seldom take place today. It is an act of sunnat to visit a bedridden person who has someone to tend him. It is written in the annotation to **Mishkât** that it is wâjib to visit him to see how he is if he has no one with him. We should join the namâz of janâza<sup>[1]</sup> performed for a dead Muslim and walk at least a few steps behind the janâza being carried to the cemetery.” Here we end our translation from the two hundred and sixty-fifth letter. Ibni ’Âbidîn states in the section headlined ‘Hazar wa Ibâha’: “If the things that are harâm exist in the room, then you go there. If they are at the meal table, then you don’t go there. If you are there because you did not know (that they existed there), then you sit there with displeasure in your heart, or leave the place under some pretext. For, an act of sunnat should be forfeited lest you should commit an act that is harâm. Backbiting or listening to people who backbite others is a sinful act worse than musical instruments and harâm games. If you are an authority or a man of position, then you should prevent the harâm situation at the table or leave the place.”

It is stated at the end of the chapter dealing with zakât in the book entitled **Mâ-lâ-budda** (and written by Muhammad Senâullah Pânî Pûtî ‘rahmatullâhi ta’âlâ ’alaih’, 1143 [1730 A.D.], Pânî-Put, India – 1225 [1810], Pânî-Put): “It is an act of muakkad sunnat to entertain your guest for three days. It becomes mustahab on days exceeding that limit.

It is stated in **Hadîqa**, towards the end of its chapter dealing with retributions incurred by way of speech: “When you are to enter someone’s house, room, or garden, it is wâjib to ask for permission. You should not enter without asking for permission by knocking on the door, ringing the doorbell, or by calling, e.g. greeting. Permission should be asked for by parents to enter their children’s rooms and by children to enter their parents’ rooms. Permission should be asked for three times. If permission is not given after the first asking, it must be asked for a second time after waiting for about a minute. If it still is not given, the request must be made a third time. In case you are not given permission this time, either, [if you have waited for as long as you would have performed a namâz of four rak’ats,] you do not enter, and leave. If the door is opened slightly, you say who you are before asking for the person you are looking for. [Likewise, when you telephone

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[1] Please see the fifteenth chapter of the fifth fascicle of **Endless Bliss** for ‘namâz of janâza’.

someone, first you say who you are.] If the person inside is someone who you already know will let you in, you may enter without asking for permission.”

A book which occupies number (3653) of the ‘Lâleli’ section of the Suleymâniyye Library of Istanbul quotes Ahmad ibni Kemâl Efendi ‘rahmatullâhi ta’âlâ ’alaih’, the ninth Ottoman Shaikh-ul-islâm, (d. 940 [1534 A.D.]) as having said in his book entitled **Kitâb-ul-ferâid**: “It is stated in a hadîth-i-sherîf quoted on the authority of Abû Umâma Sadî bin Ajlân-i-Bâhilî ‘radîy-Allâhu ’anh’ (d. 81 [700 A.D.], Homs-in Syria as of today): **“People who resemble others are not from our community. Do not resemble Jews or Christians! Jews greet one another by making a sign with their fingers, Christians do so by making a sign with their hands, and magians by bowing.”** It is stated in the book entitled **Kitâb-us-sunnat-i-wa-l-jamâ’at** (and written by Rukn-ul-islâm Ibrâhîm)<sup>[1]</sup>: Acknowledge others’ greetings! It is a custom of Jews and Christians to make signs with fingers or hands in the name of greeting. And it is a custom of magians to kiss your own hand when you see someone or to kiss his hand or to put your hand on your chest or to bow or to prostrate yourself. It is stated in the book entitled **Fatâwâ-i-Kâri-ul-Hidâya** (and written by ’Umar bin Is-haq) and in the book entitled **Shir’ât-ul-islâm** (and written by Muhammad bin Abî Bakr ‘rahmatullâhi ta’âlâ ’alaih’ (d. 573 [1178 A.D.]): “Greeting by making a sign with fingers is a Jewish custom. And it is a Christian custom to greet by making a sign with hand. A Muslim should not imitate such greetings.” Mazhar-i-Jân-i-Jânâñ ‘quddisa sirruh’ (1111 [1699 A.D.], India – martyred in 1195 [1781]) would prevent greetings made by putting the hands on the head or by bowing.

Esh-shaikh ’Alî Mahfûz ‘rahmatullâhi ta’âlâ ’alaih’, who was one of the greater ones of the scholars of the Jâmi’ul adhhar and who passed away in 1361 [1942 A.D.], states as follows in the three hundred and sixty-second page of his book entitled **al-Ibdâ’**: “Greeting as prescribed by Islam has been consigned to oblivion. This is an extremely sordid general trend. It is quite a mean behaviour to say, ‘Good morning,’ or to greet one another by making signs with the hands or by nodding or not to greet a Muslim because you do not know him or not to greet your family when you come home. It means to ignore an act of sunnat.” The

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[1] On the other hand, the book entitled **Kitâb-us-sunnat** was written by Zâhid-i-Saffâr.

book **al-Ibdâ'** contains appreciative appendices written by Shaikh 'Abdullah Dassûqî and Shaikh Yûsuf Dajwî, two of the professors of Jâmi'ul adhhar.

**When winter days are gone and Spring comes,  
Mountains' eyes open from their abeyance.  
With them dressed up all over with rose-buds,  
Philomels will no longer have to wait in patience.**

**Day and night mountains' job is to 'make tasbîh<sup>[1]</sup>',  
Birds on them always saying, "Allah, Allah."  
With heads soaring up to the firmament,  
The Qibla of prayers do all mountains face.**

**Raiment of Power is cut out for them all,  
Showers of Haqq's Compassion onto them fall.  
All kinds of flowers blossom thereon withal,  
Mountains turn into Garden with Summer's face.**

**Watch them, and you never find satiety,  
From Haqq<sup>[2]</sup> you'll receive lights of piety.  
Their breeze will blow away anxiety,  
Their dust smelling like musk and ambergris.**

**Lilies on the one side, tulips on the other,  
Their runnels all carry life-giving water.  
'Sabba ha', in meaning, starts itself to utter,  
It is mountains' business to thank Haqq forever.**

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[1] To say, "Subhân-Allah," which means, "I know Allâhu ta'âlâ far from all sorts of defects whatsoever.

[2] Allâhu ta'âlâ.

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